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Disaster Recovery Guideline for Food Service Businesses and Homeowners

The following recommendations have been provided as a guideline for food establishment operators and homeowners to use in the event of a disaster. The recommendations provided should be followed to reduce the risk of illness or injury resulting from exposure to contaminated food item, material or equipment that have been significantly altered or compromised following a power outage and/or flood incident.

Important Safety Precautions

A general assessment of affected areas of the facility must be completed to determine if the areas are safe to enter before further assessment of equipment and food items. Prior to entry into an affected building, please take the proper precautions to limit exposure to danger.

- ☐ Always wear protective clothing and equipment before entering a building that has received damages following a disaster event. Protective head gear, safety glasses, apparel (long-sleeved shirts and pants), gloves, boots and masks should be worn.
- ☐ Seek immediate medical attention for any infected cuts, wounds, rash or if you experience any respiratory difficulty after visiting the disaster area.
- ☐ Contact local fire and building authorities to evaluate the affected areas of the building to determine if there is any structural damage. If structural damage is detected, consult with local officials to assess the level of structural damage and to determine if the area is safe for occupancy.
- ☐ Carry a flashlight to use in areas with limited lighting. If power supply to the building has not been interrupted, avoid exposed wiring. Be watchful for weak ceiling and floor material.

Handling Affected Equipment

Refrigerators and other equipment that have been completely submerged in flood water cannot be salvaged and must be carefully removed from the facility for disposal. Food items that have been exposed to contaminated water, mold and chemicals are not fit for consumption and must be discarded.

Refrigerators and equipment that have not received significant exposure to flood water may be salvaged following an assessment of the unit. The following must be considered in order to determine if the unit can be salvaged.

- ☐ The level of exposure to flood water must be evaluated to make sure exterior and interior components were not submerged in flood water. Before inspecting powered equipment, make sure the unit is safely disconnected from the power source. Check the exterior of each unit for water

marks, mud, debris, rust, etc. Equipment with permeable material that cannot be successfully dried and sanitized must be disposed. If indications of water exposure observed on the exterior are minimal, the unit may be cleaned and sanitized.

- An inspection of the interior of the unit will be required for further assessment. Before opening a refrigerator, make sure the unit is disconnected from the electrical outlet. Once the unit is open, check the interior for signs of water exposure (i.e. moisture, mold, mud, debris). All food items, including canned goods that have been exposed to contaminated water must be discarded. All refrigerated and frozen perishable food items above 41 F for more than 4 hours must be discarded. Items with visible contamination (i.e. mud, mold, debris) must be discarded.
- Equipment that has received minimal exposure to flood water and can be salvaged must be cleaned and sanitized before use. The manufacturer's recommended cleaning instructions should be followed. Exterior and interior surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized with an **initial solution** containing 100-200 parts per million (PPM) of chlorine. Light fixtures, drainage areas, ventilation vents and door handles must be cleaned and sanitized. Filters, door gaskets, hoses and insulation must be cleaned and replaced if damaged. Ventilation and ductwork must be checked and evaluated prior to use.
- **Sanitizing Solution and Sanitizing Procedures:**
 - ½ Teaspoon of Bleach to 1 Gallon of Warm Water = 50 ppm.
 - 1 Tablespoon Bleach to 1 Gallon of Bleach Warm Water = 200 ppm.
 - Items (dishes, toys, and items) must be **submerged in bleach** for one minute and allow to air dry on a clean surface.
 - Tables, food preparation areas, toys and items **sprayed down** with bleach solution must be wet for one minute before wiping with disposable paper towel.
 - Wet wiped surfaces must wait two minutes before being wiped dry with a disposable paper towel.
 - Repeat steps with lower concentration 50 ppm as needed once particles, dirt material or debris has been completely removed after the initial cleaning.
 - Change bleach solution often once water color changes (water becomes dirty or contains numerous particles, dirt material or debris material).
- Equipment or appliances with a water connection must be cleaned, flushed and sanitized before use. Filters on water lines for dishwashers, post-mix soda dispensing equipment and ice makers must be thoroughly flushed or replaced. Water softeners, beverage dispensers, coffee makers, tea brewers and reverse osmosis systems should be cleaned and sanitized.
- All equipment must be in working condition. If power has been interrupted, the unit should be unplugged and stored in a clean, dry location until a source of electricity is provided. Equipment that is not in working condition must be repaired or removed for disposal.

Evaluation and Disposal of Food Items

All exposed and pre-packaged food items that have been exposed to flood water must be discarded. Refrigerated items that have been above 41 F for more than 4 hours must be discarded. If a facility has been without power for more than 24 hours, refrigerated and frozen food items should be discarded.

Food items that will be disposed must be placed in garbage bags and stored in secured refuse containers to prevent tampering or a nuisance. Large volumes of food must be disposed of within a reasonable time frame. Items for disposal must be completely separated from items that can be salvaged. **The following food items must be discarded if exposure to flood water is evident:**

- ☐ Fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, poultry, eggs and fish.
- ☐ Spices, seasonings, extracts, grains, coffee and other items in canisters.
- ☐ Home – canned food items.
- ☐ Opened and unopened jars of food items.
- ☐ Food items/beverages in screw-top, crimped or twist cap containers and pop-top containers.
- ☐ Food items in paper, foil, cardboard, cloth or plastic containers.
- ☐ Wet boxes, boxes with evidence of water splashes or moisture with food items such as single service items or materials must be discarded (sugar packets, coffee stirs, plastic knives, spoons, forks, etc.).
- ☐ Alcoholic beverages closed with a cork, screw-top, crimped or twist cap.

The following items may be salvaged:

- ☐ Food items that were not exposed to contaminated water or other contaminants.
- ☐ Food items in hermetically sealed containers (i.e. cans and pouches) that were NOT exposed to contaminated water or other contaminants may be salvaged (products stored on high areas and not subjected to splashes). Product must be closely evaluated.
- ☐ Flood water may contain raw sewage, silt, oil or chemical waste that may make exposed food items unsafe for consumption. If flood water has covered, dripped on or seeped into a package, or a safety of a food item is questionable, the food item should be discarded.
- ☐ **When in Doubt Throw It Out!**